1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

duh spirit an keep it frum followin yuh back tuh duh house. I knowd a uhmun at Burroughs wut use tuh carry food tuh uh daughtuh grabe ebry day.[58] She would take a basket uh cooked food, cake, pies, an wine. Den she would carry dishes too an set out a regluh dinnuh fuh duh daughtuh an uhsef. She say duh daughtuh's spirit meet uh deah an dey dine tuhgedduh."

Another woman • told us that on holidays she carried food to her husband's grave and left it there for the spirit to come and get.[58] "I carry duh kine uh food we use tuh hab tuh eat on duh days he wuz off frum wuk," she said. "I take cooked chicken an cake an pie an cigahs—he like tuh smoke attuh eatin.[58a, b] I do dis cuz I know he will be lookin fuh me tuh bring it.

"Ebuh since I kin membuh I hab heahd bout spirits wanduhin roun at night,"[59] she continued. "Muh mothuh nebuh would let us go tuh bed at night widout leabin plenty uh watuh in duh pails fuh duh spirits tuh drink wile yuh sleep. Ef yuh dohn leab no watuh dey wohn leh yuh res good. I tink das wy hags ride some folks,[60] cuz dey dohn leab no watuh. I blieb witches is people dat's sole deah soul tuh duh debil. Dey hab duh powuh tuh change frum deah own shape tuh anyting dey wants tuh be,[61] so dey kin tawment udduh folks. Wen a ghos is roun I kin feel duh hot eah."

We found that belief in supernatural beings such as witches and ghosts was widespread throughout the community.

"Witches is lak folks," one woman said.•• "Dey done sell demsefs tuh duh debil an he make em do anyting he wants tuh. Some git a grudge gense yuh an stahts tuh ride yuh.[62] No mattuh wut yuh do, dey kin git in yuh house. Sometime dey come lak a mouse, sometime a rabbit, an sometime eben a roach.[63] I membuh heahin bout a witch wut

• *Bessie Reese, 2407 Harden Street.*
•• *Emma English, 628 West 36th Street.*

464 island; businessmen and teachers born on the island lived in
484 adjacent mainland communities. On the mainland two subgroups
571 of blacks could be distinguished. An educated elite has owned
554 land for several generations since the Civil War and held
184 important positions in the churches, schools, and--to a
limited extent--in government. The majority of mainland blacks, however, do not own land, are poorly educated, and have traveled little. Island residents hold higher social and economic status than this poorer group of mainland blacks, but have been more limited in their occupational choices than
184 the elite group. The social and economic differences between
197 members of the closed community on the river island and the two groups of mainland blacks are reflected in linguistic choices made by the three groups. For comparative purposes,
121 the speech of selected members of the lower mainland group
197 will be compared with that of the island community. The claim will be made that opportunity to participate in social situations in which a given language variety is used is a more important influence on choosing to use that variety than simple contact with its speakers. Members of the lower mainland group retain a higher percentage of creole features in their speech than do island residents, despite the latter group's greater geographic isolation.

193
•184

TABLE 6

PERCENTAGE OF CREOLE AND NONSTANDARD VARIANTS USED BY SEX AND AGE GROUPS

		Speaker	PREPOSITION		PRONOUNS		COMPLEMENTIZER		Overall c/ns	Sex Groups c/ns
			%	N	%	N	%	N	%	%
MAINLAND	old	1f	100	(7)	39	(87)	66	(12)	68	f 73
		2f	90	(20)	79	(101)	65	(26)	78	
		3m	70	(10)	15	(103)	20	(5)	35	m 34
		4m	50	(4)	47	(15)	0	(3)	32	
		old adults							53%	
ISLAND	old	5f	57	(7)	14	(50)	43	(7)	38	f 31
		6f	67	(6)	3	(68)	0	(7)	23	
		7m	70	(10)	23	(96)	11	(28)	35	m 37
		8m	70	(10)	39	(66)	6	(30)	39	
		old adults							34%	
	middle	9f	0	(1)	0	(19)	0	(7)	0	f 4
		10f	25	(4)	0	(48)	0	(7)	8	
		11m	30	(10)	14	(125)	0	(24)	15	m 23
		12m	86	(7)	6	(49)	0	(11)	31	
		middle adults							8%	
	young	13f	100	(2)	0	(5)	0	(3)	33	f 17
		14f	0	(15)	0	(114)	0	(36)	0	
		15m	100	(4)	40	(5)	17	(12)	52	m 47
		16m	100	(1)	8	(66)	17	(12)	42	
		young adults							32%	

N = number of possible occurrences
f = female speaker
m = male speaker

121 193 statistical evidence, participant-observation in the community which confirms these findings, and from the close family relationships which obtain between several of the speakers represented in Table 6, who nevertheless show striking differences in language use.

121 562 193 184 In the mainland community, older men use more standard forms than older women--a finding which differs from that of previous studies of sex differences, except Fasold's study of the black working class in Washington, D. C. For the island community, women generally use more standard forms than men in all three age groups, although speakers in the oldest age group show very little difference in the use of creole and nonstandard forms. Women in this group use 31 percent creole and nonstandard variants in 145 possible occurrences, while men use 37 percent of 240. The heaviest users of standard forms are middle aged women in the island community.

121 562 463 193 184 I suggest that sex differences in language used by the two communities are more directly related to occupational opportunities than to sex roles as such. The occupational choices are limited by the factor of sex, to be sure, but the sex of speaker affects language choice only indirectly, in my analysis of the social factors influencing 562 463 language choice. In rural South Carolina, the occupations open to black women have been extremely limited until very recently. While the vast majority of black women in this

829 present study, a foster son of this couple returned from New
186 York after the father's death to live with his mother on the
562 island. Despite the difficult living conditions, the island remains a valued place to come home to for both middle aged and older adults. Those with the greatest degree of identification with island life seemed to be young men and older adults of both sexes.

5.2 Age of Speaker and Language Use

121 Age groups were selected on the basis of natural
561 groupings which existed in the island community itself.
484 Young people from the age of junior high school up to the early twenties formed a natural group which commuted daily to the mainland, and organized parties and dances on the island. Middle aged adults from about 30 to 50 had growing families of their own and commuted to mainland jobs daily. Older adults over 65 had either slowed down or quit entirely their mainland jobs and spent much of their time daily on the island itself; they, with a small group of pre-school children, constituted the day-time population of the island.
121 After it became apparent that a portion of the mainland popu-
56 lation differed in important respects from the island com-
184 munity, older adults from the lower socio-economic mainland group were included in the study. Language used by these age
121 groups is compared in Table 6 above (see page 120). The
561 table also reflects the relationship between the social
193
184

121 561 193 (184) factors of sex and age and the language used by a speaker. In the middle aged island group, Speakers 9 and 11 are married to each other; the wife uses no creole features, while the husband uses some for two grammatical categories. Speakers 13 and 15 in the younger age group are their daughter and son; the daughter uses creole and nonstandard forms only for the preposition, while the son uses some in every grammatical category. His overall use of such forms is higher than that of his father. Speaker 12 is the father of Speakers 14 and 16 in the young adult group. Again, the daughter uses no creole forms, while the son uses slightly more than his father in every category. By a slight margin, young island men use more creole and nonstandard forms than speakers in any other age group except older mainland women. Middle aged island speakers use fewest of such forms, chiefly due to the language patterns of women in this group, which exhibit almost none of these variants.

562 193 561 There is some indication that sex differences in the use of creole features may begin as early as seven or eight years for islanders. In narratives told by eight island children from the third through sixth grades in school, boys consistently used more creole and nonstandard variants than girls at their level. By fifth and sixth grades, island girls were using no creole forms in the three selected grammatical categories, while boys' use ranged from 14 percent to 100 percent in the pronominal category for the

193 369 urban ghetto which was in sight of City Hall in the upstate community had traveled much less extensively than had the children in the isolated rural community of Georgetown County. The rural children, many of whom had lived for extended periods in northern cities, used far more creole forms in their speech than did urban children in the upcountry. Indications were that these rural children might command a wider range of language structures along the creole continuum than those in the more urban area. In asking about mobility patterns among adult speakers in the island community, I discovered that many, if not most, older men had lived off the island for extended periods of their lives and that most women had commuted off the island on a daily basis to mainland jobs for the past three or four decades. In the mainland community, similar patterns prevailed for men, while women were much less mobile and generally worked near or in their own immediate community. Furthermore, educational patterns for women were different in the two communities to a striking degree. Many mainland women in the older generation were illiterate, while some island women had gone away to college. Land ownership patterns on the island provided a measure of economic security which enabled islanders to help educate their daughters. For these educated island women, geographic mobility was associated with social mobility as well. Nona who had college educations now lived on the island; some were married to mainland businessmen and

484 464 562 [184] 562 871 184 [212] [423] 167 166 562 871

167 others lived in other states. For speakers whose social
166 situations are roughly similar in other respects, mobility
562 seems to affect language usage to some extent. Table 9
871 provides figures on degree of geographic mobility and use of creole and nonstandard forms for island and mainland speakers.

TABLE 7

167 MOBILITY PATTERNS AND PERCENTAGE OF CREOLE AND
166 NONSTANDARD VARIANTS
484
193
•184

		Speaker	% c/ns Variants	Mobility
MAINLAND	old	1f	68	0
		2f	78	0
		3m	35	3
		4m	32	3
ISLAND	old	5f	38	1
		6f	23	3
		7m	35	3
		8m	39	2
	middle	9f	0	2
		10f	8	3
		11m	15	3
		12m	31	2
	young	13f	33	0
		14f	0	1
		15m	52	0
		16m	42	1

Mobility:
0 - never lived or worked outside community
1 - worked daily outside community
2 - lived weekly or monthly outside community
3 - lived yearly outside community

f - female speaker
m - male speaker

562 Mobility patterns are different for men and women in
484 the two communities. In the mainland community, men have
464 been considerably more mobile than women. As previously
184 mentioned, one older woman had spent her entire life working as a domestic servant for the owners of a single plantation. The other woman had a more varied employment record as a field laborer, as a cannery worker for a local seafood factory, and as a cook for a middle-class white family. She had never moved far from the sphere of a single plantation, however. Of the men, Speaker 3 in his early thirties had moved onto a plantation with the help of an uncle, and had remained there as a laborer for fifty years. Speaker 4 was the most widely traveled of this group, having received more formal education in his youth than either of the others. He had worked outside the region during a portion of his middle years, acquiring some skills and obtaining better jobs than
[193] the other man. Women in this group use more creole and non-standard forms than men, a pattern which reflects both their lack of mobility and their limited occupational choices.

562 On the island, older men have been slightly more
484 mobile than older women. Of the women, Speaker 5 has been
184 less mobile than Speaker 6, who lived for a portion of her middle years off the island. Speaker 8 was the only island resident encountered who had never attended school and has
[193] been less mobile than Speaker 7. These two men do not differ appreciably in their use of creole forms, however. For

562 older island residents, mobility does not seem to influence
484 language use to any great extent, when comparing island
184 residents with each other. When comparing island women and
193 mainland women, however, the greater mobility of island women may well be related to their greater use of standard forms. Among middle aged men from the island, mobility seems to be a factor in the greater use of creole forms by Speaker 12, who refused to commute to a job which prohibits his return to the island nightly. His use of creole features is twice that of Speaker 11, who spent some years working in Washington, D. C. In the younger group, the woman who has been least mobile uses more creole features than Speaker 14, who clerks regularly in a mainland store. Similarly, the young man (Speaker 15) with least mobility reflects this in his speech, when compared with Speaker 16, who works as a waiter in a resort motel during the tourist season. Sex of speaker appears to outweigh degree of mobility as an influence on language use, but within sex, mobility seems to be a contributing factor.

167 Over and above language use, mobility is an important factor in the population patterns of rural Georgetown County. In a report on Population and Economy in the region encompassing the county, concern is expressed about the migration patterns of younger black residents to northern cities. During a twenty-year period from 1950 to 1970, 76.8 percent of black males and 72.6 percent of black females between

island women use standard forms categorically. Standard forms for the complementizer are used categorically by a more diverse group of speakers: all island men and women in the middle aged group, young island women, one older mainland man and one older island woman. Island men in the oldest and youngest groups and mainland women in the oldest group retain creole forms across all three grammatical categories. Figure 11 indicates which speakers are most resistant to change, according to sex, age, and community membership. Group I is moving most rapidly toward standard forms, while Group III is most resistant to change. Older island women and older mainland men are somewhere in between Group II and III, as indicated by the categorical use of standard forms for the complementizer by one speaker in each of these two groups.

In a small number of speakers, carefully matched for sex, age, and social group, it has been possible to find systematic linguistic variation for three morpho-syntactic categories. The activation and progression of linguistic change in these categories are related to the social factors of speaker sex, age, community, and mobility. Those in the forefront of change are young and middle aged women in the island community who have available to them, through occupational roles reserved to their sex, opportunities to participate in a variety of speech events in which standard English is used. Those most resistant to change are also women,

121
19
184
561
562

I. Island women: young and middle aged

II. Island men: middle aged

(Island women: old)

(Mainland men: old)

III. Island men: young and old

Mainland women: old

Figure 11. Linguistic Change by Sex, Age, and Community

though of the older mainland group. Sharing their reluctance to change are older and younger island men, who have different occupational patterns and who may have stronger identification with island life than women. Again, as previous studies of sex-differentiated language use have noted, we find women occupying a paradoxical position in the process of language change. One group of women is strongly resistant to change, while another group is leading the community movement toward standard forms--both groups of women living in an isolated rural area and occupying similar social positions by conventional measures of social class. From my

121
19
178
562

861 177 it quik, dey is head fer d fira en brim stan. But it ain't dey falt."

861 184 177 The relationship being described here explains the higher tolerance of today's parents and is explicable in part by generational differences and in part by the exposure element-distance from mainland. In the case of exposure, the more distant Gullah families are more isolated from the mainland socializing influences. An effect of this more limited exposure is more adherence to "the discipline habits of ole." This adherence was reflected in the lower tolerance (reaction ratio) of parents on the distant islands. In further explanation, the work habits of women on the near islands contribute to their being the most tolerant parents. The occupational habits of these women frequently take them into the households of White families of higher economic status. When this Gullah parent is exposed to an alternate discipline pattern, this exposure may then underly the differences in tolerance found between sexes and islands.

593 861 184 The tolerance of differences may only be a function of exposure time. The case here is that parents who are engaged in the work force spend less time with their children than do elder parents. Hence the working parent would not be as quick to react to disobedience on the part of children than would grandparents who are actively engaged in child

593 861 •184 [177] rearing for longer periods each day. Women on the more distant islands are less likely to be engaged in work outside the home. They also showed the tendency to be less tolerant than mothers on the near islands. This relationship adds supports to the rationale that exposure to mainland social patterns, and the daily duration of interactions with children are key elements in the measured differences in the discipline habits of women both across generations and islands. It might also be added that the work habits of the women on the nearer islands both in terms of the nature of the labor and its consequence of a higher income base also contributes to the differences.

592 184 859 861 [867] However this is not the total explanation. It is also important to consider that the more isolated Gullah families place more emphasis on the assignment to children of chores which were central to the operation of the family unit. These tasks rather than being assigned to provide the child with a sense of responsibility are assigned on the assumption that the child already has competent work habits. Consider for the moment the child whose task is to draw water, to cut wood and handle the chicken coop. If the child neglects these chores there would indeed be serious consequences. For this neglect would noticeably disturb the operations of the household. Those households on the more distant islands being supplied only with wood burning

592 stoves would come to a halt if wood was not cut in time for
184 meals to be prepared. On the near islands with household
857 supplied with only gas stoves or with both, the child's
861 negligence would not have such dire consequences. In view of this it is easy to see how the chores of children on the far islands would be a more serious matter, and why such households tend to operate on an <u>everytime reaction ratio</u>.
593 In contrast, parents on the near islands can more afford the gift of tolerance toward neglected chores, and to react to disobedience on a <u>sometime basis</u>.

561 Differences across the generations were much more fre-
593 quent than across island and sex. The element which underly
178 much of the differences was "en ma dae" references of par-
861 ents and elder parents. The way this works is that each
592 parent tries to rear children like they were reared. The demands of the environment in which grandparents were reared differ from the household patterns under which parents were reared. The main differences other than that of exposure were in labor habits. Grandparents were reared in farming households. Consequently as children, the grandparents were up before day-break and actively engaged in burdensome farm labor. In these farming households the tasks and responsibilities of children were even more clearly defined than they are today or in the childhood of the present parent generation. Similarly the consequences

861 "undone" house chores while girls were. Upkeep of the
562 house was clearly the female role. When you also consider
[462] that females more frequently reported that they were disciplined on an everytime ratio, role differences are again indicated.

It must be clearly understood that the difference in part may be attributable to the greater likelihood that the social behavior of female children would be committed in or close to the house, than would be the case for males. This suggests that the female asocial acts could be more readily noticed. In part, parents and elders in particular may just be more lient with male children. Certainly the "man chill" attitude is prevalent here. Since females outnumber males, a premium is placed on male children. Among island
[178] parents, tolerant attitudes toward males may also be a unique cultural reflection of an African habit.

• 184 In summation, there were few areas in which signifi-
86 cant differences exist across the islands. Islanders are quite agreed in their discipline attitudes. Much of the preceding discussion must be seen in the perspective of broader level homogenity across the five islands. The most
[178] noticeable implication is that the isolation of the Sea-Islands has to a large extent protected the cultural cohe-
[177] siveness of the island community. Notions of the broad scale influence of the mainland elements on island

discipline habits is not the case. While the generational factor was upheld, the dominant pattern was the absence of significant differences across islands and particularly across sex lines.

the island children. The parents themselves have been away from this habit for nearly as many years as they were engaged in it. Consequently, the stern disciplinary demands of the farm habit was not being transferred to this generation of young islanders. In this light, the childhood histories of the elder parents was discussed. It was seen how the harsh work habits required in farming families demanded the obedient behavior of children. Under the burden of farm labor, parents were less tolerant of disobedience than parents are today. The reason given was again differences in occupation. It was also said that parents living in isolated communities were apt to discipline children more quickly than parents who have jobs, because they spend time with their children. For the farming parents, the fatigue element was said to diminish their tolerance level, and that isolated households operate in an everytime reaction ratio. These religious beliefs were introduced as elements which influence frequency and methods of discipline. Gullah Island parents, in this vain, strived to rear children under, and by guidance of the Bible. In discussing the sex role differences, parents tend to more rigidly enforce discipline on female children. This relationship was explained along two lines. The first was the status that the male child has on the islands. Here a dominance of females places a premium upon male children.

7: Jackson L-5 (1973-1976) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

CHAPTER 1

101 The field research on which this dissertation is based resulted from three years of study beginning in July 1973 and continuing through August 1976. In an effort to re-
101 strict variational data, the field work was conducted
121 primarily on Wadmalaw Island, South Carolina, because it is located further off shore and is less urbanized than many of the other Sea Islands. Linguistic research was also conducted on Johns, Edisto, Yongs and James Islands since
197 I was informed by the inhabitants that the language varied
184 from one island to the next. Bennett gives an account of noticeable interisland variation in the early twentieth century:

> There are, especially among the islands, plantations so remote... as once to have developed dialects within the dialect, the characteristic speech and peculiar idioms of one plantation differing so from those of another as to make it very possible for the adept to determine by a negro's peculiarity of dialect what community, sometimes what island...was the spokesman's place. (Bennett 1908:336)

Considering the multilingual history and the geographical inaccessibility of these islands, variation is by no means impossible, though the extent is yet unmeasured.

133 The Sea Islands are separated from the Atlantic coast and other islands by tidal channels and dense marshland.
505 Before the completion of the bridges connecting several of
491 them to the coast in the 1940's, inter-island communication was limited to a boat which traveled around the islands

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

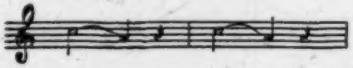
000 excitement that may lead to such exaltation as few white people ever see. It is an unforgettable experience, rare in these days of practical religion when all miracles are scientifically explained.

633 I notice that men are particularly partial to the work songs, of which the shantics [16] of the black stevedores are the most amusing. When a plantation is near a navigable river or salt water, songs like "Stevedore's in trouble, Carry 'im to the Aly-mo," and "Sandyanna" may possibly be heard. Both carry in their titles the date of their inception, and obviously hark back to the period of the Mexican War. Others bring in Australia and Rio along with "Go 'round the Horn, Yalla Gal—Go 'round the Horn" and suggest the period of the windjammer.

At The Mills on the west side of St. Simon's—in the eighteen-eighties—the Inland Waterway was filled with sailing vessels from all parts of the world.[17] These were loaded with lumber that had been floated down the Altamaha; but, as Cap'n Joe, the crew leader, says, so little lumber moves these days that the songs that helped the stevedores to handle the great "sticks" are well-nigh forgotten. A pity to let one of them be lost.

●[184] Then there are the "rags," the "fiddle" or "sinful" songs. These may be plentiful in the interior; but on the coast, where the Negroes are apparently more religious, they have been the most difficult to locate.

533 198 Where there are wide fields, musical half-yodeled calls often bring "'sponses" from laborers a mile away. When a field needs to be burned over, a sail is flapping idly, or rice is to be fanned, you may hear a Negro "calling the wind": "Co' win'! Co' win'! Co'! Co'!" A prolonged whistle follows:



—in the African manner of calling the rain.[18]

533 534 If a plantation is sufficiently remote, and the owner is ultra-modern in his taste, such a jazz band may be organized as has not been heard in many a year. It is only necessary to call for the services of those who can still "rap the bones" (real bones, of a thickness and length suitable for manipulation between the middle fingers,

[16] Or chanteys—as some prefer to call them.
[17] Julia Armstrong tells me they were lined up "like sardines in a box."
[18] A gramophone record of a Togoland rain invocation is astonishingly similar.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

are now losing—and the resistance of the slaves to "the miasma of the rice fields" enabled them to take care of the crop during the "pestilential season" with the minimum of white supervision. In consequence, all white residents who could leave [25] fled at nightfall to the "salts"—as the sea marshes were called—or to the dry and higher pine land, whichever might be nearer, and the Negroes were left very much to themselves. It requires no stretch of the imagination to assume that the beloved rhythms and dances that had been brought from Africa were kept alive in just this way. For which let me say—God be praised! I have never been able to believe that all virtue was vested in the white man or his music.

Another statement of Lyell's is so accurate that it should be given here. He tells us that "The slaves identify themselves with the master, and their sense of their own importance rises with his success in life." Mrs. Shadman, who knew all the ex-slaves on St. Simon's, told me that Maum Rhina at Cannon's Point was heard to say: "I hol' my head jus' as high as my Missus. I'se a Wylly nig'ah." The Wylly Negroes always felt they were superior to those of the Hazzards, who lived on the adjoining plantation. The feeling of animosity that has persisted for more than a century among the descendants of the slaves of the two plantations may be because of the duel over a boundary dispute, in which young Wylly was killed by his neighbor, Dr. Hazzard.

In spite of the Negroes being passionately fond of music and dancing, the activity of the Baptist and Methodist missionaries was such before 1845 that Lyell tells us: "On the Hopeton Plantation above twenty violins have been silenced." The ban on secular music was the same in the vicinity of Beaufort, South Carolina. The editors of *Slave Songs of the United States* reported that they never saw a musical instrument among the Port Royal freedmen, and mentioned that the last violin, owned by a "wordly man," disappeared from Coffin's Point in 1861. They expressed regret that they could not obtain enough secular songs to make a division by themselves, and went on to say: "It is . . . already becoming difficult to obtain these songs. Even the 'spirituals' are going out of use on the plantations, superseded by the new style of religious music, 'closely imitated from the white people.' " The statement made by the editors that "The same songs are used for rowing as for shouting," holds true on the coast of Georgia, and it is interesting to find that the identical tunes were favorites the length of the sea-island chain between the Peedee and the Satilla Rivers. (Map, page xxxii.)

The similarity of the speech, customs, and music of the Gullah Negroes through-

[25] The terms of the overseer's contract required his presence on the plantation except under urgent circumstances.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

out this section is not surprising to those who have studied its social and economic conditions at first hand—or have carefully read *Seed from Madagascar* by Duncan Clinch Heyward. This gentleman's words are authoritative. He learned planting methods and the management of Negro labor at first hand on the Combahee swamp plantations of his paternal ancestors in South Carolina and at the Clinch Plantation, called Refuge, on the Satilla River in Georgia, where his maternal ancestors were also rice planters.

In *American Humor*, Constance Rourke quotes a traveler as saying in 1795 that "The blacks are the great humorists of the nation." She goes on to tell us how Negro humor has always been abundant, and how, from it, early minstrels drew as from a primal source. She also says that many minstrels had lived in the South and West and knew the Negro at first hand. One of them saw an old peddler of watermelons with a donkey cart in a Georgia town, and followed him about until he had mastered his lingo, cries, and snatches of song, which may account for the similarity of our Negro secular songs to those of the minstrel stage. Few of the white singers, however, gave credit where it was due. Miss Rourke states that "Plantation owners on the Mississippi had crews of black oarsmen who sang as they rowed and improvised good-natured verses to match the occasions of the day. . . ."[20] A western poet declared that 'among the earliest original verses of the West were sundry African melodies celebrating the coon hunt and the vicissitudes of river navigation.' The Negro was to be seen everywhere in the South and in the new Southwest, on small farms and great plantations, on roads and levees. He was often an all but equal member of many a pioneering expedition. He became, in short, a dominant figure in spite of his condition and commanded a definite portraiture."

Because of his position in democratic communities it is readily seen why the songs of the Negro have left their stamp on those of the hill-billy and the cowboy; and when he attended the same revival meetings as the whites—as he frequently did—his mode of singing undoubtedly exerted as much influence upon their religious songs as his secular music does today upon our radio singers.

[20] They carried on a tradition that was characteristic of the South Carolina and Georgia coast. Liverpool, who was stroke oar of the Butler Island crew of ten men, told me they rowed a cypress dugout, thirty-three feet long, made from one immense log. His favorite rowing song was "Zion," but others preferred "Knee-bone." Mrs. G. V. Cate tells us, in Our Todays and Yesterdays, "there was a spirit of rivalry among the planters to have the best boat . . . and a desire on the part of the slaves to sing the best songs. The oarsmen of one plantation would never sing the songs belonging to another plantation," and when a boat passed at night it would be known from the song to what plantation the singers belonged.

In A Walk across Africa, Grant describes a very large canoe—hollowed out of an immense tree—that carried a ton and a half.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

533 try, and here there is felt comparatively little back-wash from the recent exploitation of Negro songs. In such an area certain folk-song traits and processes may be observed more clearly than elsewhere. Some of these may be indicated in the following observations on the St. Helena spirituals.

• [184] 1. The spirituals of St. Helena are not markedly different from the Negro spirituals as a whole. They are sung in the characteristic sea-island dialect, of course, and minor variations occur, but fundamentally they are one with Negro spirituals in other parts of the country.

2. The spirituals are sung in unison for the most part. There is very little singing in parts except by the Penn School Quartet and a few other quartets or groups which have practised their songs. Heard from a distance, the singing in praise house or church often gives the impression of multiple part singing, but this effect is more or less of an illusion caused by some of the singers varying the pitch of a given tone or attempting a bit of tenor or alto here, a bit of bass there. Those who look for some weird or new harmonic element contributed to American music by the Negroes of the Sea Islands will be disappointed, for such harmonies as they do use are in no wise different from conventional white harmonies.

533 191 3. There is apparently very little invention or improvisation going on among the island singers. Practically all of the spirituals sung on the island appear to have originated elsewhere and to have migrated to the sea-island region. Because of the continued survival there of many songs rarely heard outside the Sea Islands, it is easy

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

collectors of spirituals? And why are they not common property of the Negroes in the intermediate sections? The simple explanation, I believe, is this: these songs originated further north than St. Helena, probably in the piedmont of North Carolina and Virginia, during the white revival period. By the usual process of folk transmission they spread out gradually from the area of origin, and, by the time they reached the outlying sections like the Sea Islands and the trans-Appalachian country, they had disappeared and had been replaced by other songs in the area of origin. It would be safe to predict that if collectors will look into the matter they will find in other communities on the fringe of the black belt and among individuals of the older generation in the piedmont a surprising number of these St. Helena spirituals.[88] Thus the percentage of pentatonic tunes on St. Helena increased after the infiltration of songs from the area which had felt strongly the folk music heritage of the Scotch-Irish. These considerations are all directly opposed to the theory that the scale peculiarities of the spirituals survive from African traits.

533 533 174 [114] [198]

Modulations. Change from one key or one mode to another within a tune is practically unknown in the Negro spirituals. Modulations are frequent in conventional church music, but in the plainer music of the white revivals of a hundred years ago as recorded in the songsters, modulations were exceedingly rare. This musical heritage was derived from English folk songs, of which Sharp has said,

533

[88] For example, recently a Negro woman from Chapel Hill, N. C., was comparing spirituals with a woman from St. Helena. Upon hearing the St. Helena version of *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, she exclaimed, "That's the way my folks used to sing it all the time." In the up-country the other version of *Roll, Jordan, Roll* has displaced this one, which is usually considered peculiar to the Sea Islands.

[184].

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

after the Federal occupation in 1861. Arthur Sumner, from Cambridge, Massachusetts, tried to describe to his cousin their way of speaking. "These negroes speak with an inarticulate jabber. The sounds roll around in their great chops, and come pouring out through their huge mouths, so that I find it easier to understand a foreign language than confused utterance. Their idioms, too, are funny. I told Byron, a boy who waits upon me, that I was going to distribute clothing on his place. 'Talk *toe* house?' said he:—meaning, 'Are you speaking of our house?' . . . Byron came to me with a message from his mother—'Ma says if you give her some trade'—Imagine such a sentence uttered as if it were a word of many syllables. Can you make it out? . . . 'Ma wants to know if you will give her some thread?'"[11]

These missionaries from the North, who, of course, knew nothing first-hand of slavery, thought that the St. Helena Negroes were the most degraded and backward of all the coastal slaves in the South.[12] After the northern whites had become acquainted with other sea-island Negroes from such places as St. Simon's Island, Georgia, and Edisto Island, South Carolina, who were quartered temporarily on St. Helena Island by the Federal Army, they were still of the opinion that the St. Helena slaves were the most retarded in the South except those on the sugar plantations in Louisiana. Arthur Sumner wrote late in 1862, "The Georgia and Florida negroes are vastly superior in appearance, character, and intelligence, to the natives of these Islands. It is the testimony

[11] Arthur Sumner Papers. Port Royal, May 18, 1862. The last word was pronounced as if spelled trod, not trade.

[12] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 181.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

of all those who knew the South, that the colored people of the Sea Islands, are the lowest grade of Negroes in America. I'm sure I hope I shall never see a worse set than those who live on our part of St. Helena Island."[113] Miss Harriet Ware, who had been conducting a school on St. Helena, concluded in 1863 that "as a general thing the Edisto people are a better class of blacks, more intelligent and cultivated, so to speak."[114]

It is not surprising that the St. Helena slaves should have been less advanced than those even of neighboring islands, for as it has already been pointed out, St. Helena Island was one of the most isolated of the Sea Islands. It is a buffer from the Atlantic for two other large islands, and the Island itself is cut up into various small islands by the broad tidal creeks which interlace it. It is likely that at least half of the more than two thousand slaves who inhabited St. Helena in 1860 had never been off the Island, for Beaufort was difficult to reach and only the most privileged were allowed to go there. Shut off from contact with the outside world, they were thus unfamiliar with many of the cultural traits of the whites which had sprung up since their own forebears had become "tamed."

It is remarkable, then, that the slaves should have achieved as much of the culture of the whites as they did. They were quick to learn from the few whites with whom they were thrown and from the house servants who went back and forth with the master's family from the Island

[113] Arthur Sumner Papers. Dec., 26, 1862.

[114] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 150. See also the opinion of Charles P. Ware, *ibid.*, p. 97; of W. C. Gannett, *ibid.*, p. 178; and see James S. Pike, *The Prostrate State: South Carolina Under Negro Government*, ch. XXXII; Whitelaw Reid, *After the War: A Southern Tour*, p. 94; Hazard Stevens, *The Life of Isaac Ingalls Stevens*, II, 354.